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Antigone
BY SOPHOCLES



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All references come from the Dover Publications edition of *Antigone*, published in 1993.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Life in Ancient Greece

Objectives: Placing a literary work within historical context
Refining research skills by consulting a variety of sources

Activity

Antigone, written in mid fourth-century B.C., takes place during this time in Greece, and more specifically in the city of Thebes. Many of the events and customs described in *Antigone* can be a bit confusing to people in our own contemporary times. Explore the setting in detail, using the reference points listed below, and create a research project to present your discoveries to the class. Several project ideas are listed.

Topics for Research:

- Government (city-states, trial by jury, democratic principles...)
- Families (roles for men and women, children, slaves...)
- Architecture (design and function, structures such as houses, temples, public buildings...)
- Style and Fashion (types and functions of clothing, hairstyles...)
- Art (theatre, dance, storytelling, tragedy/comedy, purposes...)
- Education (ages, purposes, boys versus girls, Sparta versus Athens...)
- Geography (explore how geography dictated the way of life for Greeks...)

Project Ideas:

- Board Game
- Skit demonstrating key ideas
- Power Point presentation and quiz for class
- Photo journal showing key ideas (use hand-drawn pictures or pictures from Internet)
- Mock documentary
- Your own idea, pre-approved by teacher

Name: _____

Date: _____

During Reading: Entire Play

Plot Summation

Objective: Interpreting and summarizing events in a literary work

Activity

A summary is a brief restatement of key events and ideas in your own words. It can be a useful tool in preventing you from getting lost in myriad details, thus helping you to see the big picture. Keep this sheet safely in a notebook or folder as you read *Antigone*, and after each part of the play (indicated below) record two to three sentences that reveal the key events and ideas for that section. The first one has been done for you.

Prologos: _____

Parados: _____

Episode One: _____

Stasimon One: _____

Episode Two: _____

Stasimon Two: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

During Reading: Episode One

Paraphrasing for Understanding

Objective: Understanding a work of literature through paraphrase

Activity

To summarize is to review and state the main points of what has occurred in your reading. Read the following selection from the short story "The Cask of Amontillado" by Edgar Allan Poe.

"In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess."

A summary statement of what occurred in that passage might be simply:

"The narrator quickly and easily chained a man to the wall of the catacombs."

To paraphrase is different from summary in that you restate closely, in your own words, a sentence or paragraph. Take, for instance, the following passage, also from "The Cask of Amontillado."

"A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated, I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall; I replied to the yells of him who clamored. I reechoed, I aided, I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamor grew still."

A paraphrase of that paragraph might be:

"His screams unnerved the narrator, and for a moment he is worried that someone might hear. He nearly strikes out at his prisoner with a sword to silence him, but instead, reassured by the solidity of the catacombs, screams back at him until he falls silent." All of the details from the original paragraph have been incorporated into a statement that condenses in different, simpler words and phrasing, the same basic point.

Paraphrase the following passages from Episode One of *Antigone*. Page references for the full context of each passage are provided. The first has been done for you as an example.

1. "Now, since they perished,/Both on one day, slain by a two-edged fate,/Striking and stricken, sullied with a stain/Of mutual fratricide, I, as you know/In right of kinship nearest to the dead,/Possess the throne and take the supreme power." (Page 8)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Episode Two

Obedience

Objective: Identifying with characters

Activity

In Episode Two (Pages 15 – 22), the sentry discovers Antigone in the act of burying Polynices. He brings her before Creon, who questions her actions harshly. After all, she is his niece, his subject, and soon to be the wife of his son, Haemon. Should she not obey his dictate, no matter who the unburied man may be? Antigone defends her actions, telling Creon that is the law of the gods states that no man should be left unburied, and that these laws of the gods supersede his own. Creon, infuriated by Antigone's continued defiance, sentences her to death.

Surely both Antigone and Creon have valid points. Which of the two do you feel has a stronger justification for his or her actions?

In a journal entry, discuss your feelings regarding Creon's decree, Antigone's defiance, and Creon's intended punishment of Antigone. Decide whose cause you are more sympathetic to, Creon's or Antigone's, and list three to five reasons for this.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Episode Three**Voice of Reason****Objective:** Identifying with characters and their choices**Activity**

In Episode Three, Haemon tries to reason with his father, Creon, concerning his ruling. He at first compliments him on his intelligence and his wisdom, trying to gain his approval, and then suggests humbly that Creon reconsider his decision. After all, he explains, the people of Thebes regard Antigone in the light of a heroine, calling her brave and just, as she was only fulfilling the divine laws of the gods. Haemon urges Creon to consider that Antigone's execution might make the people of Thebes regard him unfavorably. Although well voiced and done so with respect, Creon is infuriated that his son sides with Antigone and refuses to alter his decision. Haemon, too, flies into a rage and vows to kill himself before seeing Antigone dead.

Imagine for a moment that Haemon had approached Antigone before Creon and urged the same moderation of action that he did his father. Do you think the outcome would have been any different?

Find a partner and elect one of you to be Antigone and one to be Haemon. Write a short letter from Haemon to Antigone, urging her to see reason and reconsider the reckless folly of her actions. Antigone needs to then read Haemon's letter and respond in a similar letter, letting him know her decision regarding his request. Be prepared to tell the class about your letters, and what arguments either persuaded Antigone to repent or what arguments failed to do so.

Name: _____

Date: _____

During or After Reading

Choral Performances

Objective: Selecting, planning, and performing choral readings in a tragedy

Activity

The Chorus was an extremely important part of ancient Greek tragedy. The Chorus functioned both as a part of the drama and also as a separate entity that commented on the events of the play and moralized to the audience. At times, individual members of the Chorus would speak in dialogue with actors in the drama, and at other times, the Choral member might speak a few lines directly to the audience. The main choral passages were filled with singing and dancing, accompanied by carefully planned and orchestrated music. Dances performed by the Chorus ranged from fairly stationary, with rhythmic, symbolic gesturing, to more energetic, ritualistic dances that represented such things as funeral processions or wedding marches.

Not including the exodus, which is very brief, there are six choral odes in *Antigone*, each of which will be made up of three to five students. In these groups of three to five, plan a performance for the assigned choral ode, using the above explanation to do so. Be creative, and keep in mind the importance of the Chorus in ancient Greek drama.

Choral Odes:

- Parados (Pages 5 – 7)
- Stasimon One (Pages 13 – 15)
- Stasimon Two (Pages 23 – 24)
- Stasimon Three (Pages 29 – 30)
- Stasimon Four (Pages 35 – 37)
- Stasimon Five (Pages 42 – 43)